

Weathersfield Conservation Commission

December 2, 2021

Virtual meeting via Zoom [<https://sau70.zoom.us/j/96973178845?pwd=ck1JRE1Tbjhla056QVdpNllxWmNHdz09>]

Present: Ryan Gumbart, Cheryl Cox, Tyler Harwell, Jeff Pelton, Howard Beach, Ellen Clattenburg

Ryan opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Minutes: Roy moved and Jeff seconded the motion to approve the October minutes. All voted in favor.

Budget request to the Town: We have been asked to submit an annual budget request. There was considerable discussion about whether we should or should not include the Town Forest budget in our request. The commission agreed that it would serve the town best to have the Town Forest budget be a separate line item. Thus we had two motions:

- 1) Tyler moved that we request the Town to create a line item in the Town budget of \$1600 to meet expenses in the upcoming year for the Town Forest. Howard seconded this motion. All voted in favor of this motion.
- 2) Ellen Clattenburg moved that we request \$500 for our annual expenses of education and outreach, membership in the Vermont association of conservation commissions and participation in the state annual meeting. Roy Burton made a friendly amendment to increase this request to \$1000. Tyler Harwell seconded the motion as amended. This motion passed unanimously.

Town Forest

Cabin: The cabin in the town forest — as well as the shed and the outhouse — will need to be demolished, possibly removed or partly removed and disposed of. Ryan suggested that the next step is to have someone come take a look at it and let us know the right method of demolition and/or removal as well as the right equipment to do this job. Ryan will speak to Brandon about the process for requesting a bid on the removal/demolition. Jeff pointed out that the large tree that fell on the shed is lying in the access to the cabin. Ryan offered to cut up the tree and open up access. Jeff will take Tyler to the cabin on Saturday at 1 to look over the situation and get Tyler's thoughts.

- The cabin roofing is metal
- It is made of logs and they may be able to be dismantled and left on the ground
- The shed is plastic
- It is not known whether the outhouse is on a vault at all and if it is, whether that is plastic or cement
- If equipment needs to be brought in (like a mini excavator), this will need to wait until the culvert is installed — and that culvert is part of the VOREC grant.

VOREC grant update: the application was submitted earlier this week. Only one letter of support per town was allowed. Brandon wrote it and various townspeople signed it. Ryan was sure

Forestry: Nothing more from Hannah Dallas, the County Forester, who will do a cruise of the town forest, probably next spring. Roy noted that she will likely be getting some assistance from another state forester.

Trails: Ryan asked for our approval for the ATA trails. The ATA needs our approval before they can apply for grants and schedule trail building. Their lead time is 1-3 years. Howard moved that we approve

the whole trail network that the ATA has proposed. Tyler seconded this motion. Five members voted in favor and Jeff Pelton abstained.

Jeff had several concerns. He feels there is more pressing work (demolition of the cabin, installation of the bridge/culvert, signage) to be done before the ATA builds more trails. He was concerned that forest improvement might be prevented by the trails. He also has misgivings about the lack of hiking trails, trails that lead to scenic vistas, that highlight important forest features and that connect to park trails. Ryan reassured him that the proposed High Line trail will be a hiking trail; that the three proposed trails are just the starting point for the ATA and that these trails will give access to different areas of the Town Forest; that other trails will connect to the Futures and other trails; that beyond the first two trails (Cloudspin and the proposed blue trail connecting to it) the proposals from the ATA are for more standard hiking trails with scenic vistas and picnic areas, and finally that trails will enhance accessibility for the management of the Town Forest. The ATA has not yet begun their work in the Town Forest, (Cloudspin was developed by Stan Spencer on his own.) To move ahead, to apply for grants, the ATA requires our approval.

Kiosk: Jeff gave an update: Jeff has secured Bibens Home Center's donation of building materials and wondered if anyone had any changes in the list of materials submitted by Matt Keniston? Matt is looking for a volunteer or two to help both with construction, staining, and a pick up of the building materials. The kiosk will be placed at the entrance to the Town Forest. Jeff will send the list of materials to Bibens to see what they say.

ARPA funding: it's not clear what kind of funding would be offered to different groups in town. Ryan solicited ideas which could be funded by the ARPA funds. Howard clarified that requests which lead to economic development will probably have priority.

- Trailhead kiosk
- Benches along trails
- Interpretive signs along trails
- Trail building
- Game of Logging course (there are many requests for this course which offers certification)
- Cabin removal
- Printing of maps of different resources in town we are protecting (wetlands, deer yards, etc.)
- Inventory of priority amphibian road crossings — this involves hiring an expert to help us locate these spring crossings and to locate the biggest threats to amphibian populations

Jeff suggested that the interpretive signage on the trail from Ascutney Outdoors is a good model.

Dam relicensing: Will dam relicensing lead to funds for the Town, and if so, what would they be used for? Ideas thrown out and discussed: improving the end of Ferry Road combined with a regular (weekly) Town crew trash pick up; gaining public access to the river by the purchase of a spot on the river which would have space for parking, too. Jeff pointed out that there is access behind the trailer park in Ascutney but there's no room for parking and, like Ferry Road, not something residents of the area want — too many problems with trash, parties, and the like.

Tyler had suggested inventorying old dams in town for the purpose of decommissioning them. Howard noted that this is something the state is mandated to do, so we should not use our ARPA funds for that. He does think doing an inventory is a good idea though problematic logistically.

Scenic Vistas. Jeff has done some work on that project but still needs to provide the direction of the view (using a compass to ascertain this). This is to update the energy section of the Town Plan. At the next Planning Board meeting on Dec. 13 at 7 pm, there will be an update on how the town can protect itself from the State placing solar wherever they want. Howard invited the commissioners to attend this important meeting (on Zoom).

Waterway naming project. Jeff met with the Mt. Ascutney Regional Planning Commission. They have agreed to make the final map for the Waterway petition. Both the small scale and large scale versions of this map should be ready in two weeks. Jeff has also asked Olivia Savage to run off individual petitions for each of the waterways. He's waiting to find out how much information is needed on location of the waterways. The next step will be to circulate the petition for signatures. Once the map is complete, Jeff will meet with the Planning Commission.

There was no new business

Howard made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 pm.

Notes compiled and submitted by Ellen Clattenburg, secretary